

TEXT	'Germans at Meat', from <i>In a German Pension</i>
AUTHOR	Katherine Mansfield
THEMES	Making a point (Unit 2), Food for thought (Unit 4), The great escape (Unit 6), Fit as a fiddle (Unit 9), Sink or swim! (Unit 10)
VOCABULARY	Various, including words for food.
WRITING	Students write an email to a friend.
SPEAKING	Students tell the class about unusual foods from around the world.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) was one of the greatest short stories writers of the twentieth century. Mansfield was as important as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce in defining the Modernist approach to narrative.

WARMER

Focus on the picture. Ask students if they think this is a family house or a hotel. Could it be either? Why? / Why not? Ask which meal they are probably eating and whether they are just starting or have already eaten.

ABOUT YOU

The questions focus on several key themes in the extract. When do we eat with strangers? (In hotels, or at social events, for example, at school, before we get to know people, etc.) 'Small talk' is often about food, weather, sport, etc. Students comment on their opinion of food in their country and can also give examples of food they like from other countries.

- 1 Ask for ideas and suggestions. You could point out that we would need non-linguistic information to know the answer to this question – seeing people's expressions when they see the food, how they look when they remember eating breakfast in England, etc. Do students get the impression that the food people remembered eating in England was better than the food they have now? Do we sometimes have an idea that 'the grass is greener on the other side' (meaning that we think others have better things than us)?

2

Suggested answers

- 1 They think there is a lot of it. Perhaps they are surprised by the variety, and are of the opinion that people in England can eat a lot ('that is nothing to you') and one person complains about the tea.
- 2 The unnecessary use of conjunctions (polysyndeton) is a way of giving extra emphasis. It stresses the quantity and variety. You could elicit more examples of this from students – describing a very big meal – *We ate pizza and chips and burgers and cheese ...*, etc.
- 3 He seems annoyed that the narrator talks about doing things to the pot rather than about the tea or water. Perhaps he thinks she is joking or not sharing her real knowledge of tea-making.
- 4 She says directly that she isn't happy finding herself in a situation where she has to defend English breakfast when she prefers a cup of coffee herself. She might also feel uncomfortable because everyone is focusing on her, and because she is speaking in another language. In addition, Mr Rat's response to her explanation of making tea is rather critical.

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 veal 2 vehemently 3 teapot 4 consistency
(buttoning and kidneys not used)

4

Answers

- 1 buttoning 2 kidney 3 fixed 4 peered 5 brightly

WRITING

- 5 Look at the task with students and get them to identify the information their friend is asking for. Ask if it's a good idea to devote a short paragraph to answer each question, or put all the information in one paragraph. (As the former is better for organisation, ask them to write the email in short paragraphs, and add an additional piece of information their friend hasn't asked for.)

SPEAKING

- 6 Go through the instructions and clarify that students should look for unusual food/dishes from around the world. Obviously, there will be cultural issues involved here as what is strange for one person might be normal for someone else, so emphasise that there are many different cuisines and cultural traditions related to food. The scoring system is intended to make students search for more unusual examples.

MIXED ABILITY

Presentations are an opportunity for students with mixed ability to work together and contribute ideas. Appoint a coordinator from each group (a stronger student) and stress that their job is to ensure everybody is involved in the research and preparing the presentation. Weaker students may not want to speak in the presentation itself but they can make a valuable contribution in terms of finding the relevant information.